
QUESTIONING THE VIEW: SEASIDE'S CRITIQUE OF THE GAZE OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE

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Petrarch, about 1327, climbed Mont Ventoux near Avignon. He was accompanied by the belief that the view from the top would be significant, and unaccompanied by his fiends, who saw no reason to go. Petrarch was sight for six hundred years, and now his friends are right.

Donald Judd, *Arts Magazine* (March 1962)

Seaside can be read in many ways—as a proposition about urban design, as a discourse on developer/architect relations, as an argument for the vernacular, as a descriptive account of a place, as a demonstration of the increasing role of women in the architectural profession, as an essay on resort culture, or as a critique of modernism. In the course of this essay, I shall hope to touch on some, though certainly not all, of these, but it is Seaside's critique of what I am calling "the gaze of modern architecture" that will structure my reading.

Unlike most modern developments, especially those for resort communities, Seaside does not offer itself as the purchase of a view (fig. 1). In this, it goes against the common perception of not only what a modern vacationer expects, but also what modern architecture in general is supposed to provide. While the graphic means used to represent this economy of desire in a typical advertisement for an apartment in the up-scale real-estate section of the *New York Times Magazine* might be just market-driven and theoretically unsophisticated (fig. 2), the conceptual model to which they ultimately refer makes us acutely aware of the authority of "the view" in the aesthetics and culture of modernism (fig. 3). What Seaside provides, by contrast, is an ambience, an evocation of a place rather than simply its appropriation through visual means. Sense and memory are appealed to reciprocally. The key to its atmosphere is the binary relation between town and sea, perfectly characterized by the name Seaside.

The town lies beside the sea, well above it, linking it to the woods behind (p. 105). The bright white sand of the beach and the greenish-blue water of the gulf are masked from view by the high dune paralleling the main road. Periodically, the town steps over the dune and down to the beach through light-filled, festive pavilions that line the road and create, as it were, public thresholds to the sea (p. 76).

There is no fudging of boundaries at Seaside—no acculturation of nature, no naturalization of culture. For residents and visitors, it is a place of charm and gentleness, of pedestrian-scaled movement, and of close-grained community interaction. It is a townscape that comes as close as one might imagine possible today to the eighteenth-century classical ideal of "variety within unity"—somewhere between the University of Virginia and Chaux. A lucid geometric street pattern underlies and gives order to the playful detailing and pastel colors of the individual buildings. Towers of all shapes and types, some like temples, others more like tempiettos, become confused from a distance in the silvery blue plane of galvanized tin roofs that reflect the sky and provide a metallic base to the green cordon of trees that define the edge of the town, much as the scrub-topped dune defines the edge of the beach.

When members of the architectural establishment, be they practitioners, critics, or educators, are asked their opinion, however, Seaside is usually described in more "problematic" terms. Known essentially through pictures, especially the early, high-keyed

ones by Steven Brooke, the town is easily reduced to the image of the picturesque suburb, cozy and domesticated, its architectural character ruled by a very debatable "nostalgia" and historicism. In spite of that, the town-planning strategy is quite often acknowledged as a valid return to sound, community-based principles that should really only be evaluated if and when they are applied to more "serious" purposes than a mere vacation resort. Thus reduced to the status of a model, Seaside is decontextualized. The very atmosphere it is all about is lost sight of in the distinction of form from content.

A relatively subtle extension of this critical position has begun to make itself felt with the recent completion and publication of Walter Chatham's house and Deborah Berke's and Steven Holl's buildings on the main square. Deliberately pushing the Seaside architectural code to accommodate an explicitly modern, even neomodernist vocabulary and esthetic, these structures have made "strong" and "tough" statements that have been read by eager critics as offering "reassuring evidence that the town's soundly drafted design rules need not promote an excess of 'cuteness' or 'mandate historicism.'" ¹ The designers of the town itself, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, have been reluctant to take a firm stand on this issue, maintaining that the structural rules they laid down in the urban code of Seaside are elastic enough to permit such wide divergences in style while still ensuring the urbanity and community atmosphere so clearly represented by the classical or vernacular buildings that devolve more logically and directly from the code.

All of which brings me to my main point, which is that despite whatever misgivings or questions have since been raised in the minds of its planners and architects, the conception of Seaside represents one of the most thoroughgoing and integral critiques of the ideology of modern architecture realized so far either in the United States or in Europe, and that its significance as a critique depends on the intimate fit of form and content defined by the design codes of the town. The target is the fundamental privatization of experience in modern architecture with its corollary valorization of that which can be rendered in purely visual terms. The questioning of other essential values of modernism, such as the role of the author-architect, the belief in originality, and the hypostatization of space, all follow from this. The logic of the argument, as adumbrated by Duany and Plater-Zyberk, moves through a series of frames of reference, each one implying the next. First there is the Code, then the Street, and finally the Window, the interface of public and private where vision is defined in both its social and psychological dimensions.

Let me begin by saying something about the concept of a code. Codes are rarely, if ever, discussed in the history of modern architecture. One usually thinks of bureaucratic documents detailing wind loads, fire resistance, building-height setbacks, handicapped access, etc. To be sure, architects have begun more and more to discuss the growing importance of such restrictions in actually determining design decisions. But the mythology of modern architecture, whether it be based on Le Corbusier defying the "authorities" at Pessac or Marseilles, or Wright going to court in New York over the Guggenheim, is that building codes are philistine devices designed to thwart the individual creativity of the architect. No more so would this be the case than when a code for a small town has been drawn up to mandate a certain style.

From the point of view of modern architecture, building codes are simply unnecessary and unwelcome restraints. They inhibit the free play of the author's imagination and impede the search for "originality." What has never been seen before cannot be coded. By contrast, recent literary theory and criticism, which have pronounced the "death of the author," have raised to a very special plane of significance the role of the code.² Codes, whether of language, of body movement, of dress, or of food, are seen to be not only essential ingredients for communication, but also inescapable ones. They are essential for providing an interindividual, or intersubjective, basis for discourse. They are inescapable in that whatever is thought to be original, pure, or authentic is really only a "naturalized sign," one

¹ John Morris Dixon, "Seaside Ascetic," *Progressive Architecture* 8 (August 1989): 59-67; and Beth Dunlop, "Corning of Age," *Architectural Record* 177 (July 1989): 96-103.

² See, e.g., Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (1968; reprint, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48; along with his *Elements of Semiology* (1964; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

that denies its own arbitrariness and facticity for ideological purposes—witness the belief in modernism as a "natural" way of building, transcending the artificial conventions of "the styles"; or the conviction that the various signs of modernism, such as the picture window, the flat roof, or the unornamented use of "natural materials," came into being simply as the direct response to new conditions.

Duany and Plater-Zyberk have stressed the importance of the code for Seaside with an acute understanding of its poststructuralist implications (pp. 98–99). Its purpose in their view is social—"to make a public realm."³

It defines the area of interindividuality. It prescribes the framework of the urban order at the same time as it defines certain types and elements of design and construction that fit into and articulate that order.

It establishes a syntax, a grammar, and even suggests a vocabulary, in recognition of the fact that, to attain "a harmonious city," a commonly agreed upon language must be openly acknowledged. Perhaps most significantly, after drawing up the code, which is more a table than a written text, Duany and Plater-Zyberk declined to design any buildings themselves, as if to assure the "death of the author" in the "birth of the reader," that is, those other architects and designers who would subsequently interpret the code.⁴ The urban code of Seaside had, as Duany said, "very clear, physical prototypes in mind." One would have to go out of one's way to "misinterpret" the signs.⁵

There are actually two separate codes for Seaside, the urban code and the so-called architectural code. (I will refer to the differences later.) The urban code, which is the more general of the two, is considered by Duany and Plater-Zyberk to be the instrumental one, the one "necessary for the town to exist socially." The key factor in it is the social space of the street, what Louis Kahn called "the place of human agreement." "Our code is based on the making of public space; the datum is the streetline," Duany said. "Everything is fixed on the street."⁶ In fact it was the decision to retain the county road, which runs along the beach, as the main thoroughfare of the town that allowed the plan finally to gel (pp. 91, 93). From it, a grid overlaid by diagonal avenues extends back inland and the hierarchy of street sizes differentially determines building setbacks, frontage widths, porch depths, as well as building heights.

A layout of streets can be read as the architectural equivalent of a code of social behavior. The street is like a sentence, the neighborhood a paragraph, the section a chapter, and the town a book. This is all the more important to insist upon since the street, or the lack thereof; is so easily "naturalized" as a sign. And we should not forget that the elimination of the street provided the ground for the institution of modern architecture. Still the most chilling description of the dissolution of this site of social discourse in favor of a more atomized, privatized space is Le Corbusier's almost paranoid denunciation in "The Street" of 1929:

The street is no more than a trench, a deep cleft, a narrow passage. And although we have been accustomed to it for more than a thousand years, our hearts are always oppressed by the constriction of its enclosing walls.

The street is full of people: one must take care where one goes men and women are elbowing their way among them, . . . and every aspect of human life pullulates throughout their length. Those who have eyes in their heads can find plenty to amuse them in this sea of lusts and faces. It is better than the theatre, better than what we read in novels.

³ David Mohney, "Interview with Andres Duany," in *Seaside: Making a Town in America*, 63.

⁴ The terms, of course, are Roland Barthes's (see Note 2 above).

⁵ Mohney, "Interview with Andres Duany," 64. In this context, it is interesting to recall how Walter Chatham described his attitude toward the code in his attempt to produce an autonomous design for his own house: "I experimented to see how different a building I could design within the given stipulations. My house is meant to be a work of modern architecture" (quoted in an article by Carol Vogel, in the *New York Times Magazine* [30 April 1989, 56], aptly entitled "Double Standards").

⁶ Mohney, "Interview with Andres Duany," 66.

*Nothing of all this exalts us with the joy that architecture provokes. There is . . . only pitying compassion born of the shock of encountering the faces of our fellows. . . .
The street wears us out.
And when all is said and done we have to admit it disgusts us.*⁷

While I will not dwell here on the profoundly gendered character of this description—in which the dark cleft of the street becomes a site of filth and promiscuity, an image of the aggressive, fearsome female—it should nevertheless be borne in mind when contemplating the virginal, edenic antidote Le Corbusier offered in its stead.⁸ In place of the street, Le Corbusier proposed a series of independent, "widely-spaced crystal towers" set in an "expanse of parks with a tossing sea of verdure" (fig. 4).⁹ Freed from the terrifyingly constrictive walls of the street, one would come into direct contact with unspoiled nature, unmediated by traditional signs of architectural representation. Such a "radiant city" would become modern architecture's naturalized home. The sign of this new-found freedom to communicate directly with nature, to make architecture transparent to its natural surroundings and thus give the individual immediate access to it and control over it, was the redefinition of the window in terms of the wall. Known as a strip-window, ribbon-window, *fenêtre en longueur*, or window-wall, the sign eventually became part of the domestic vocabulary as the picture window. Yet no doubt as a result of its quite literal transparency, this fundamental sign of modernism has never received the kind of critical attention accorded the other four signs in the aesthetic code Le Corbusier called his "five points."

The birth of the picture window was a direct outcome of the "death of the street."¹⁰ There was no reason whatsoever to open up a building to the view if all that was to be seen was the dreary house across the street. Le Corbusier further recommended that his glass-walled buildings be "not oriented in alignment with the motor-roads or foot-paths" so as to prevent anything from obstructing the visual field.¹¹ Isolated in space and rotating around its own axis, each tower would control its own environment, just as its inhabitants would master it through their view. If the angles of rotation were carefully enough planned, no one would see anyone else, just nature—or what Le Corbusier soon came to designate, even more abstractly, as "sun, space, and greenery" (fig. 5).

The Seaside code gives special prominence to the relation between the traditional window and the street, recognizing the critical role the window plays in organizing the transition from public to private space. As I already indicated, there are, in effect, two codes operative at Seaside, the urban code and the so-called architectural code. The architectural code specifically governs materials, finishes, contractor's responsibilities, and the like, while the urban code more generally deals with the relation between individual buildings and the infrastructure. One would therefore normally assume that window dimensions fall under the architectural code, along with such things as door types, roofing materials, siding patterns, and chimney details—and they do. But the key restriction relative to windows, that "openings be square or in proportion vertical"—in other words, *not* horizontal—is also included in the urban code. The only other purely architectural element (and here I am leaving out porches) that is covered in both codes is the roof, which must be "a gable or hip with a slope of 8 in 12," or, if flat, habitable as a deck "and enclosed by a continuous balustrade."

Both the roof and the window are signally characterizing elements of design. They establish the building's presence on the street as a social being. They both traditionally carry strong

⁷ Le Corbusier, "The Street," in W. Boesiger and O. Stonorov, eds., *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret: Oeuvre Complète*, vol. 1, 1910-1929 (1929; reprint, Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture, 1964), 118.

⁸ The gendered content of Le Corbusier's text was astutely pointed out to me by Anna Chave.

⁹ Boesiger and Stonorov, *Oeuvre Complète*, vol. 1, 1910-1929, 118-19.

¹⁰ This phrase was a chapter heading in Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse (The Radiant City)* (1933; reprint, New York: Orion Press, 1967), 119. Le Corbusier described the horizontal window as the essential factor in "instituting a new architecture" (Le Corbusier, *Une Maison-Un Palais: A la recherche d'une unité architecturale* [Paris: G. Cres, 1928], 106). It was, in his teleological view, simply "the in-avoidable consequence of rein-forced concrete [construction]" (Le Corbusier, *Almanach d'architecture moderne* [Paris: G. Cres, 1925], 96).

¹¹ Boesiger and Stonorov, *Oeuvre Complète*, vol. 1, 1910-1929, 119.

anthropomorphic references. For Frank Lloyd Wright, the roof type defined the house's individual character.¹² Like the color of one's hair, or the way it is done, or the hat worn on top of the head, the shape of the roof is an immediate indicator of personality. Erwin Panofsky's celebrated discussion of iconography begins with the tipping of a hat.¹³ The windows of a building have most often been seen as its eyes and thus, by extension, the image of its soul. Windows are consequently more complex in their signification than roofs, for they are not only seen from (and through) the outside, but are also meant to be looked through from within.

When looked through from within, the shape of a window becomes particularly telling, for in relation to the viewer's entire body the window loses its transparency to the eye. A square window is probably the most analogous with the eye itself. Two square windows, one on either side of a door, make a face, or, as in Wright's Winslow House, a mask (fig. 6). A vertically proportioned window establishes a homologous relationship with the body standing in front of it. It is not by chance that the French call our American sash window a "guillotine window." The French window typically begins at the floor, like a door, and thus can be said to stand as the paradigmatic case—an opening through which the eye sees as the body moves with it. (When Marcel Duchamp blacked out the panes of a French window by pasting pieces of leather on the outside, he called the sculpture *Fresh Widow* [fig. 7].) The sash window functions like a synecdoche, condensing the role of the body in vision into its upper half, the symbolic seat of human understanding and intelligence.

The horizontal window, by contrast, suspends the relation to the body and offers up to the eye alone a distanced, more abstract field of vision (fig. 8). Its analogue is with the landscape itself, a relationship reinforced over the course of many centuries by the conventional use in Western art of the horizontal format for landscape painting (the vertical being reserved for portraits). Where the vertical window inscribes the body in the act of vision, and thereby establishes a coherent relation between inside and outside, the horizontal window alienates the one from the other by means of a transparency (as in diapositive) that reduces the world outside to a view.¹⁴ The absoluteness of such a transparency is further secured by the elimination of mullions, which in the more traditional vertical or square window always asserted the physicality of the opening's surface.

When one considers the relation between inside and outside, as established by the window, from a point of view outside the building, then the differences in shape of the opening take on even more explicit social and psychological definition. The issue, of course, has to do with privacy, exposure, and, in the extreme, voyeurism. Windows obviously let the view in. One might assume that the question is simply one of size, but that is clearly not the case. Vertical and square windows can only be so wide. They are limited, in effect, by their height, which is in turn limited by the floor-to-ceiling height, which has tended, in modern construction, to decrease or at least remain stable. Horizontal windows, on the other hand, are almost entirely free to expand in width as much as the architect deems fit, to the point where what had traditionally been private (the interior) is opened up to public scrutiny,

¹² Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 23 (March 1908): 159.

¹³ Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning and the Visual Arts* (1939; reprint, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 26-28.

¹⁴ For a related though some-what different interpretation of this issue, see Bruno Reichlin, "The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window: The Perret-Le Corbusier Controversy," *Daidalos: Berlin Architectural Journal* 13 (15 September 1984): 65-78; as well as his more recent "'Une petite maison' on Lake Lemman: The Perret-Le Corbusier Controversy," *Lotus International* 60 (1989): esp. 63-71. Reichlin reinscribes Le Corbusier's critique of Perret in maintaining that the horizontal window not only lets in more light, but also denies the perspectival effect of a vertical opening which, in Perret's view, "reproduces an 'impression of complete space' because it permits a view of the street, the garden and the sky" (*Daidalos*, 72). This final conclusion, however, which wants to maintain the affinity of the horizontal window with twentieth-century notions of pictorial space (while at the same time preserving a "naturalistic" sense of transparency!) does not take into account the position of the subject, or observer, in relation to the window opening. Clearly, the degree of vertical expanse from ground to sky is dependent not on the *shape* of the window as much as on one's *distance* from it. On the other hand, it is the *shape*, and only the shape, of the window that determines our reading of it on the body/landscape axis outlined here.

unless some remedial measure is taken, all of which ultimately foregrounds issues of class, power, and gender. One can easily trace the development of the large-scale picture window, or window-wall, of the modern house, beginning with the earliest examples soon after the turn of the century, to the availability of plate glass for domestic use. In the process of adaptation from commercial to domestic purposes, however, a primary reason for the commercial exploitation of plate glass was ignored or, at the very least, sublimated. One of the first important uses for plate glass, by the end of the nineteenth century, was to create the large display window, or show window, of the modern department store. These windows were designed to exhibit the goods that could be purchased inside in such a way as to seduce the generally female "window shopper" to enter the store (fig. 9). Mannequins were "dressed" in settings resembling domestic situations, while objects might be grouped to form "still-lives." An inordinately desirable interior world thus offered itself up to the possessive gaze of the onlooker through the exercise of certain means of control and manipulation responsive to the needs of the capitalist economy. When the display window was transferred to the actual domestic environment, the social and psychological mechanisms of the market naturally had to be redirected outward.¹⁵ But what could never be adequately dealt with, except by such extraordinary means as wall-to-wall drapes or exterior baffles, was what later came to be called the "fish bowl" effect (fig. 10). Those who had been empowered with a sense of possession through their view became the objects of a view from the outside that effectively dispossessed them. Popular magazines like *House Beautiful* constantly warned that "a picture window should not be a 'show window.' . . . It should *not* turn a house into a gold fish bowl."¹⁶

Although the term "picture window," which dates from the late thirties, was specifically meant to define a horizontal pane of glass set in the wall, usually with openable vertical slots on either side (in effect, a domesticated "Chicago window"),¹⁷ it appears to have been Mies who first made the literal connection between picture and window through the collaged photographic image. Many of his designs for country houses in Germany in the early thirties picture views of the landscape through large expanses of glass walls. These culminated in the project for the Stanley Resor House in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, of 1938, where photographs of mountain scenes are substituted for the elevations of the long walls, as if those pictures constituted at the same time the physical fabric of the house and the view seen from it (fig. 11). Architecture and nature become totally transparent to one another. Structure is rendered as a void, as merely cuts in the photograph. No floor, no ceiling, no side walls are indicated. The collaged elements float in the middle of the blank page, eerily suspended in a disembodied abstract space, addressing the sense of sight alone.

The Belgian Surrealist painter Rene Magritte probably best captured the disorienting and alienating character of the picture window in his numerous paintings of the subject beginning in the 1930s (fig. 12). Typically, these paintings, done in a *trompe l'oeil* style, show a window, framed by curtains, within which is a picture on an easel that supposedly depicts the part of the scene the picture masks. Other versions, lacking the easel and painting, simply show the glass of the window broken, with the shards on the floor retaining the image they would have revealed in the window. Despite the fact that the typical window in Magritte's other renderings of architectural scenes, like the windows in his own house, were vertical French windows, all the ones in this series of paintings are horizontal, with a segmental lunette over them, obviously referring to the space of the landscape and the sky above.

¹⁵ As early as 1906, The English Arts and Crafts architect M. H. Baillie Scott, concerned about the increased size of plate glass windows in "the modern villa," noted how "from the outside we have been made aware of these gashes in the structure, which reveal the window arranged, like a shop is, for outside effect. There is the table with its vase, the lace curtains, and the rest..." (*Houses and Gardens* [London: George Newnes, 1906], 66).

¹⁶ Anon., "Is there a Picture in your Picture Window?" *House Beautiful* 92 (January 1950): 35.

¹⁷ Robert Davis, whose grandfather owned one of the largest department stores in Birmingham, Alabama, recalls how his grandfather referred to the shop windows in his store as "picture windows" and how he eventually installed one of them in the living room of his own house.

There are also a number of paintings by Magritte that treat the themes of exposure, exhibitionism, and voyeurism, all in an architectural context. In the United States, at about the same time, Edward Hopper made the image of a naked or suggestively-clad woman in front of an open window the sign of modern vulnerability and of urban and small-town anomie (fig. 13). And in what Mary Ann Doane has called the "paranoid woman's films" of Hollywood of the 1940s, the window "becomes a potential point of violence, intrusion and aggression" in its role as "the interface between inside and outside, the feminine space of the family and reproduction and the masculine space of production."¹⁸

But it was Marcel Duchamp who most calculatedly deconstructed the mechanisms of display involved in the adoption of the "picture window" as the final term in the evolution of the Albertian paradigm of painting. *The Large Glass*, significantly subtitled *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–22), focalizes the view on the surface of the glass itself, denying thereby any presumption of transparency, and defining the window as a place of arrested movement (fig. 14). The gendered structure of the mechanical transaction is inscribed in the superposed female and male forms, represented by the permeable shape of the Milky Way stretched out above the upright Malic Moulds. Duchamp's understanding of male voyeurism as a model for modern art ultimately resulted in the room housing the display of a spread-eagled, naked woman he constructed for his last work, the *Etant Donnés* (1946–66), which literally turns the spectator into a Peeping-Tom.

Few modern architects ever seem to have acknowledged the inherently paradoxical and illusory nature of transparency, as Magritte or Duchamp did. More to the point, few seem to have grasped the manipulative and alienating effect of the picture window. Indeed, most took it straight (fig. 15), so much so that the ideal of transparency, whether literal or phenomenal, became an unquestioned article of faith.¹⁹ The authority of the view lay in the putative power of the contemplative subject. But the question rarely raised is, *Who* is that subject and what does it represent?²⁰ To offer some preliminary answers to these questions, it seems worthwhile to spend a few moments in analyzing the small house Le

¹⁸ Mary Ann Doane, "The 'Woman's Film': Possession and Address," in M. A. Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams, eds., *Revision.. Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (Frederick, MD and Los Angeles, CA: University Publications of America and The American Film Institute, 1984), p. 72. See also her book, *The Desire to Desire: The Vonzan's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington and Indiana-polis: Indiana University Press, 1987). I should like to thank Norman Bryson for suggesting the relevance of Doane's work to my argument. On the various complexities of coding the (urban) workplace male and the (suburban) home female, see Susan Saegert, "Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictory Realities," *Signs: journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (Spring 1980, supplement): S96–S111.

¹⁹ The key text here, of course, is Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," originally published in 1963 (*Perspecta* 8) and reprinted in C. Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 159–83. Le Corbusier's caption for the sketch in fig. 15, as it appears in the *Oeuvre Complète*, vol. 4, 1938–46 reads: "A frame all around! The four receding lines of a perspective! The room is set up facing the view. The entire landscape enters the room" (81). Le Corbusier's belief in transparency, i.e., that the view through the glass of the *fenêtre en longueur* provides an unmediated image of the world outside, can be likened to his belief that the use of *pilotis* left the ground beneath the house in its "natural" state. Without any apparent irony intended, he used the analogy of the shop window to describe the appearance of a building on *pilotis*: "Le bâtiment se présente comme un objet de vitrine sur un support d'étalage, it se lit *entier*?" (Le Corbusier, *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme* [Paris: G. Cres, 1930], 50, 60).

²⁰ Recently, some attention has begun to be focused on the problem. An issue of *Daidalos* (vol. 13 [September 1984]), dealing with relations between interior and exterior space, contains interesting articles by Norbert Miller, Kyra Stromberg, and Bruno Reichlin, on the subject of windows. Reichlin's studies of the "Perret–Le Corbusier Controversy" (see Note 14) offer penetrating insights into the "paradoxical nature" of the picture window, but without, in my view, problematizing the issue of the subject. In another recent essay on Le Corbusier, Beatriz Colomina acknowledges the distinction that any window effects "between being in a landscape and seeing it" in order to suggest that the transparency of Le Corbusier's horizontal window "works to put this condition, this caesura, in evidence" ("*L'Esprit Nouveau: Architecture and Publicité*," in B. Colomina, ed., *Architectureproduction* [New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988], esp. 95–99). Her conclusion, that Le Corbusier's space is like that of the camera, decentering the subject and devaluing the controlling "eye of the beholder," seems to contradict Le Corbusier's constant assertion of the centrality of human vision—"the eye being the 'master of ceremonies,'" "as he put it—in the organization and perception of architectural space (Le Corbusier, *The Modulor* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958], 72–76.

Corbusier built for his parents, between 1923 and 1925, on Lake Geneva, and about which he later wrote a very telling description in the short book entitled *Une Petite Maison*.²¹ The search for a site with a view was the first step. A plan was readied in advance, much like loading a camera with film or, indeed, a gun with ammunition, so that when the site was sighted the plan could simply be discharged to the local contractor. Le Corbusier drew the moment of siting/sighting as a giant disembodied eye hovering beside a small, male figure (fig. 16). The eye/I directs its gaze toward the distant ridge of recumbent mountains seen on the horizon against the lower curve of the lake. The plot of ground, or *terrain*, is drawn along the lake shore as a thin rectangle with a slot through it. Upended and placed midway between the eye and the scene, the slotted frame acts as a kind of focal plane, reminding us of Renaissance images of perspectival construction, in which a gridded window pane was set up to record the intersection of the pyramid of vision culminating in the eye of the observer-artist (fig. 17).²²

The analogy with one-point perspective is further developed in another small drawing on the following page of the book, which shows all the major highways of Europe converging on this single point of view. Then finally comes the plan of the house, partially enclosed by a protective wall, but with its single, thirty-five-foot-long picture window, across the lake front, directly facing the mountains on the far shore (fig. 18). *Its window*, as Le Corbusier called it, like *its eye*, establishes absolute control over the view.²³ In turn, the plan of the house is drawn abstractly mirroring the view and submitting the serrated and curvaceous forms of the mountains to a controlling geometry, the Düreresque opposition of active and passive forces plainly describing an attitude toward the relation between art and nature that must surely be understood in gendered terms.

To announce the authority of the view, and thereby distinguish it from undifferentiated nature, Le Corbusier realized that it was necessary in part to frame it. To that effect, he punched a horizontal opening in the cloister-like wall of the garden at one "strategic point," as he put it, so as to make the view into a picture.²⁴ But that was only to be a kind of prologue. The main drama was reserved for the interior of the house. At the point where the cloister wall comes up to the edge of the house, the wall was drawn back, like the curtain of a stage, so that the view through the picture window from inside the house would be like that through a proscenium arch (fig. 19). Indeed, Le Corbusier described the action in theatrical terms: "Suddenly, the wall stops and the spectacle comes into view—light, space, the water, and the mountains . . . *Voilà*: the trick has been played!"²⁵

Le Corbusier, however, would not admit that all was illusion, for he spoke of the window as literally "bringing the grandeur of a magnificent landscape into the house: the lake with its movements, the Alps with the miracle of their light."²⁶ The effect of transparency was such that, when you are inside the house, looking out, "the landscape 'is right there,' as if you were in the garden."²⁷ Carrying the analogy to its logical conclusion with an economy based on what Guy Debord has more recently called the "commodity as spectacle,"²⁸ Le Corbusier

²¹ Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison*, 1923 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1954). It is interesting that both Reichlin articles cited above (Note 14) take this house and book as their point of departure for discussing Le Corbusier's thinking about the horizontal window.

²² Svetlana Alpers has offered a trenchant analysis of the gendered character of the Italian Renaissance concept of the perspectival picture as a window onto the world. In reference to the Dürer print illustrated here, she says: "Dürer's woodcut tellingly reveals [this active confidence in human powers] in the relationship of the male artist to the female observed who offers her naked body to him to draw. The attitude toward women in this art—toward the central image of the female nude in particular—is part and parcel of a commanding attitude toward the possession of the world" ("Art History and Its Exclusions: The Example of Dutch Art," in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* [New York: Harper & Row, Icon Editions, 1982], 187).

²³ Le Corbusier, *Petite Maison*, 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 31. As Reichlin has also noted, Le Corbusier similarly described the long picture window of the house in theatrical terms, once as the "principal actor of the house" (34–35) and again as "the sole actor of the facade" (40).

²⁶ Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, 130.

²⁷ Le Corbusier, *Almanach*, 94.

²⁸ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967; reprint, Detroit: Black & Red, 1977), 34ff.

declared that, with their new home, his parents had "*acquired* an incomparable and inalienable view." ("Sun, space, and greenery were acquired" in the bargain.)²⁹ In other words, with a little money down and a brilliant architect as an son, they secured permanent rights over a vast domain through the mere purchase of its view. And mastery of the view immediately conferred prestige and status on the house. In what is truly an extraordinary statement, Le Corbusier concluded that "the thirty-five-foot-long window" gave the house "*de la classe!*" (gave it "class!")³⁰ (Interestingly, the word "class" was translated in the accompanying English text of the book as "style.")

Le Corbusier's explanation of his parents' "little house" perfectly summarizes the significance of the horizontal picture window for modern architecture. Let us simply note the various aspects in order. One: buildings are designed for individuals, and their private esthetic experience of the world is what must primarily be addressed by the architect. Two: that experience can fundamentally be reduced to the visual, or optical, sense. Three: the supply of a view confers the requisite return on an investment in a house. Four: the view provides a sense of control over a domain much larger than that literally paid for. Five: the disproportion between what is actually owned and what is felt to be within one's purview is understood in terms of the virtuality of the spectacle. Six: the substitution of a surrogate world, in the form of a commodity fetish, reminds one of the origin of the picture window in the commercial development of the department store display window. Seven: the abstraction of the view to the optical sense alone allows for the transparency that is necessary to convince the viewer of the identity between nature and its artistic representation. Eight: the transcendent control of the view, reinforced by the privileged nature of its source, confers on any house graced with such a prospect an inherent sense of "class" (not to be confused with the superficial attributes of the "styles"). Nine: the sense of "class" is clearly linked to wealth in that only those who can afford the privacy of a view can avoid being spied on in return (or have an entire lake as well as a national boundary as a front yard). And ten: the exposure of the less fortunate and the less powerful to the gaze of others reveals a political dimension of vision that may most appropriately be characterized in terms of gender.

The proscription of the horizontal picture window in the Seaside urban code can be understood in the light of the concern of a postmodern generation with the social and psychological dimensions of perception, with the "ways of seeing," as John Berger has put it, rather than simply with what is seen.³¹ As a result of the refusal to accept vision as merely a natural act, any sign of it, like the window, is "denaturalized," and such determining factors as money, gender, class, and power are foregrounded. To begin to understand how this might work in the case of Seaside, I think it would be extremely helpful to borrow some of the concepts and terminology relating to "vision" and "visuality" that have recently proved quite fruitful in the analysis of the pictorial arts, in particular, film, painting, and photography.

In his work on the origins of modern painting, Norman Bryson distinguishes between two paradigmatic ways of seeing as "the gaze" and "the glance," adapting for his purposes ideas from Sartre, Foucault, Berger, Mulvey, and especially the French psycho-analyst Jacques Lacan.³² The gaze defines a transcendent, abstracting, immobile eye that views the world from a lofty Cartesian point of view. It is the eye posited by Renaissance perspective, an eye that controls, masters, and orders reality in a space of its own making that is outside time. "The logic of the Gaze," according to Bryson, "is subject to two great laws: the body (of the painter, of the viewer) is reduced to a single point...; and the moment of the Gaze... is placed outside duration."³³ The glance, by contrast, is mobile, partial, and inferential,

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Petite Maison*, 13-14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

³¹ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London and Harmondsworth: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin, 1972).

³² Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), esp. 87-131.

³³ *Ibid.*, 96.

building up impressions over time. It is subject to the changing conditions around it. Fragmented and intermittent, it relies on a person's memories and other senses to form an image that is always shifting and can never be isolated or pinned down. Where the gaze fastens on a *view*, the glance provides a *glimpse*. Where the gaze freezes reality into a spectacle to be appreciated at a distance, the glance incorporates aspects of the world seen close up into an ambient sense of environment.³⁴ The gaze positions its subject as spectator-owner so that the view becomes *his* possession. I purposely use the male possessive pronoun, for the aggressive position of the gaze as a historical construct of modern Western culture has generally been interpreted as implying the masculine point of view. "*Men act and women appear*," Berger noted. "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at... The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female."³⁵ Although recent thinking has tended to question such an absolute identification of the gaze with the masculine subject, it should be clear that, in its interactive relation of the body to the objects in the environment around it, the glance can still be said to represent its binary opposite in gendered terms.³⁶

The most striking feature of Seaside, especially given its function as a vacation resort community, is its refusal to reduce the experience of living there to the acquisition of a view. This is in marked contrast not only to the nearby towns of Destin and Panama City (fig. 20), but to the typical postwar international resort, where bleacher-like slabs, or clusters of town houses, line up along the beachfront to face the view like sea gulls at an outgoing tide.³⁷ Normally, upon arriving at your destination, you get out of your car, go up to your unit with its large picture window facing the water, and capture the view in an instant (or Instamatic) (fig. 21). It is yours throughout the remainder of your stay, and you can even carry it back home with you as a photograph or a picture postcard. To buy into such a view, even on a time-sharing basis, is to "Own Your Piece of Heaven," as the promotional literature for the major new resort of Palmas del Mar, on the southeast coast of Puerto Rico, puts it.

At Seaside, a very different perceptual process takes place, one that is incremental and time-consuming. You do not immediately turn your back to the road and direct your attention out from the private space of your living room to the sea. The generous town square, surrounded by streets radiating from it, defines the larger communal environment in relation to the woods to the north. The streets are close enough to one another so that you tend to go places by foot (p. 73, fig. 14). You get a sense of the place bit by bit, not just as one fast blur through a car window. The houses, fronted by porches and edged by 'picket fences, are extremely close to one another, which immediately puts you in mind of who your neighbors are and what your neighborhood is like. Inside your house, the intermittent window openings, some shaded by deep porches, allow glimpses of the street in front, or alleys to the side and rear. A scrub oak, some sand, a bit of sky, a latticework enclosure, or a neighbor's child shooting a water pistol appears like a moving figure in a scenario of summer vacation life that you slowly piece together from the interior world of your house. This is the world of the glance, of embodied vision. If you want an overall view of Seaside, you can get it from one of the myriad towers that the planners have encouraged homeowners to build. But it will always be a view *of* Seaside and not simply *from* Seaside. The towers function like those of medieval churches and cathedrals. The surrounding landscape is seen as an extension of the town, a frame around it. The town fills the

³⁴ Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore have proposed a similar distinction: "When we consciously stare at an object the body boundary hardens and there is a heightened sense of separation, whereas a casual viewing weakens the sense of separation and encourages instead a psychic fusion with the subject" (Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body, Memory and Architecture* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977], 43).

³⁵ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47.

³⁶ See, e.g., E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983); Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); and M. A. Doane, *Desire to Desire*.

³⁷ One can trace the concept back to Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the San Marcos-in-the-Desert Hotel, for the South Phoenix Mountains, of 1928-29, and Le Corbusier's project for the seaside community at Oued-Ouchaïa, outside Algiers, of 1932-34.

foreground and acts as a *repoussoir* figure. The architecture does not disappear into the void, i.e., become part of nature, as in Mies's Resor House, but rather provides a center for a multifaceted visual experience of the landscape that is built up slowly over time. The very fact of having to climb the tower before being able to look around becomes a forceful reminder of the mobile, physically active character of vision understood in the glance.

The relation between interior and exterior space at Seaside, like that between town and surrounding landscape, is one of difference rather than sameness, of discontinuity rather than continuity; and it is this sense of difference that is rediscovered as providing a communal meaning. The private world of the family inside the house is separated from the public world of the community outside, yet linked to it by means of the screened porch. This coded hierarchy of social behavior could only reoccur with the disappearance of the picture window. The anti-social character of large expanses of glass, which might not be terribly significant in houses for the very rich (viz., Mme. Savoie, Stanley Resor, or Philip Johnson), is particularly deleterious for communities housing those lower down the social and economic ladders. In order to preserve even a sense of vista within the typical subdivision, one would either have to give up any regular form of street pattern or else resort to some device or other to provide a kind of visual buffering, as these suggestions from *House Beautiful* in 1950 illustrate (fig. 22-24). The result has invariably been at the expense of the community, for whether the solution is to erect intermediate barriers or simply to turn the house's center of attention inward, the social space of the street is compromised and eroded until it literally becomes invisible (fig. 25).

Indeed, such a complete privatization of the public realm was the only way of dealing "architecturally" with the problem of exposure and voyeurism posed by the picture window. No doubt this is one of the reasons why the picture window, in particular, came to be seen in the postwar pop literature of the suburb as the very sign of the frustrated housewife. Home alone, almost all day, almost every day, waiting for her children to return from school and her husband from work, she could either "turn herself into an object," as Berger would say,³⁸ by standing in front of the living-room window, or deny herself that freedom and save her sense of self by retiring to the kitchen, which became the woman's social space. The title of John Keats's book *The Crack in the Picture Window* (1958) might therefore fittingly serve in any discussion of Seaside as an early warning sign of a postmodern social order in which relations of men and women, of power and authority, of money and class, are in process of negotiating new forms of balance.³⁹ In this regard, it may not be mere coincidence that no other project in contemporary architecture of comparable scale and significance to Seaside has so evenly distributed its overall planning and commissions for building to women and to men.

In its proscription of the picture window, the Seaside code helps restore a sense of balance by acknowledging and dealing with differences, both in human and architectural terms. In denaturalizing and thereby calling attention to one of the identifying signs of modernism, if not its fundamental one, the Seaside code allows us to see the degree to which certain structures of thought are implicit in particular modes of vision. The actual realization of the town following the rules of the code makes palpable the enormous differences between a *development* based on the gaze of modern architecture and a *community* resulting from the application of the principles of the glance. For this reason, the tower Leon Krier is to construct in the main square of Seaside will no doubt make a most evocative symbol for the town (pp. 168-171). It will bring together into a single community vantage point the various individual "views" that the modern picture window dispersed throughout space. And in

³⁸ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47. The power of a window with a view to turn its intended subject into an object was commented on already early in the nineteenth century by the English poet John Keats. Writing to his wife Fanny, he remarked: "I should like the window to open onto the Lake of Geneva—and there I'd sit and read all day like a picture of somebody reading" (quoted in Kyra Stromberg, "The Window in the Picture—The Picture in the Window," *Daidalos* 13:60).

³⁹ John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958). What eventually filled the crack in the window by replacing its opening onto the world with a less revealing, more privatized mode of contact, was the television.

dislocating the source of the view from the private to the public domain, it will reverse the roles figure and ground have generally assumed in modern architecture by foregrounding the streets and their containing walls of buildings and framing them in glimpses of the gulf and the woods.

As a final note, I should just like to add that Krier's tower also makes one wonder about the future of Seaside—what it will look like when looked down on in ten years or more. And this brings me back to the distinction its planners, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, seem to be willing to make between the architectural and urban codes. Although what I have said here about the restriction on window shapes might lead one to believe that they are correct in claiming that the urban code is enough to ensure a continuity of their ideas over time, I would suggest that perhaps the vision they have of the community is too integral and too strong in their own minds to allow them to see how fragile it really is. The street must be a "place of human agreement" for it to continue to exist. But given the fact that the code specifically allows for the granting of all sorts of variances based on what is described as "architectural merit," but clearly can mean whatever is thought to be "interesting" or "exciting" in architectural design at the time, one can reasonably ask: When do individual initiative and experiment become factors in the erosion of the social fabric once again? When, in effect, does the authority of class, in the Corbusian sense, overtake the issue of style? Can attempts to be "modern"—especially when they are intentionally primitivizing or abstract (p. 78)—be contained within a code that was, in Duany's own words, written with "clear, physical prototypes in mind" in order to allow one to "go straight to the result"?

Perhaps so, if we take Deborah Berke's Modica Market or the Steven Holl building as borderline examples (p. 132-133, 172-177).⁴⁰ Still, one wonders how soon a hit of stretching of the code here or pushing of it there, in the name of neo-modernism, will result in the erosion of the very structure of the town the urban code is supposed to be able, in the abstract, to maintain. In a place with a climate like Seaside's, the picture window is not actually necessary, as Walter Chatham's house amply demonstrates, to cause the spilling over of the private into the public through a lack of definition between interior and exterior that is symptomatic of modern architecture's rejection of the street. It would indeed be an added bonus if Seaside were to prove, over the next decade, that modern architecture could come to terms with the street, and that the integration of "community and privacy" was not merely a rhetorical device of utopian modernism or just a nostalgic dream of the more recent past.⁴¹ But the specter Duany raises of Seaside going high-rise "fifty years down the line" through the "power of money"⁴² could in fact take place even sooner through the variances the code allows "on the basis of architectural merit." One should not forget that Le Corbusier's villas preceded his high rises by a quarter of a century, as did Mies's; and Wright built only one of his many high-rise projects (in Oklahoma), whereas Broadacre City is everywhere.

⁴⁰ Even here, it is interesting to note how one refers to Deborah Berke's Modica Market and *the* Steven Holl Building in such a way as to assert the authorial character of the latter. This is all the more ironic, especially from the point of view of modernist rhetoric, since Berke's building is strikingly original whereas Holl's is clearly derived from Aldo Rossi.

⁴¹ In retrospect, it is fascinating to note how little is said of community and how much is prescribed for the achievement of privacy in Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander, *Community and Privacy: Toward a New Architecture of Humanism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1963).

⁴² Mohny, "Interview with Andres Duany," 73.